

**KANSAS HEAD START ASSOCIATION
EARLY HEAD START PREGNANCY AND ORAL HEALTH SERVICES
FACT SHEET**

Delta Dental Plan of Kansas Foundation has awarded a grant to Kansas Head Start Association, in partnership with Legacy Foundation of Cowley County, Kansas, to establish an education and training program on oral health services for pregnant women.

- **The grant serves 35 counties scattered throughout Kansas where Early Head Start programs and Cowley County Tiny Teeth provide services to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers and their families.**
- **Potentially 25,000 pregnant women and their families will receive materials, education and training on maintaining quality oral health.**

Pregnant women's poor oral health can affect significantly the health of the fetus, the woman, and her newborn child.

- **Pregnant women must consume appropriate amounts of folic acid and calcium to ensure that teeth and palate are developing correctly in the fetus.**
- **The pregnant woman's oral health is often in danger from morning sickness, poor nutrition, hormone induced gingivitis, and misinformation about dental care when pregnant. Based on recommendations from Academy of Periodontology, pregnant women need a dental cleaning and exam to determine her oral health status. Dental professionals can recommend necessary guidance and treatment to ensure good oral health.**
- **Untreated gum and tooth disease can result in severe infections. While research on the link between periodontal disease and low-birth weight babies and preterm labor is inconclusive, it is prudent to ensure that pregnant women are assessed for oral infections and receive appropriate treatment. March of Dimes estimates that one out of eight births in the United States "arrives too soon." Of the 35 counties being served by this project, 15 counties report that over 7% of births are low-birth weight babies.**
- **Women with untreated tooth decay may have high levels of Step Mutans. If pregnant women do not follow recommendations from dental professionals to reduce this bacteria, they most likely will pass this decay-producing bacteria on to their infants.**

If women learn to master their own oral hygiene when pregnant, they may be more likely to continue oral hygiene for themselves and their children

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